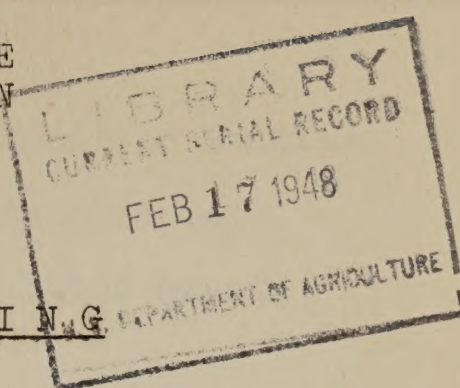


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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
PRODUCTION AND MARKETING ADMINISTRATION
INFORMATION SERVICE

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Reserve



A G R I C U L T U R A L M A R K E T I N G

(Script No. 13.....For Use During
The Period December 8---21, 1947)

PART I: ----- POTATO MARKETING ROUNDUP (PP 1-7)

PART II:----- TURKEY FOR CHRISTMAS (PP 7-13)

PART I: ----- POTATO MARKETING ROUNDUP (7½ Minutes)

ANN: The marketing of America's food is of direct concern to everyone --- farmer, distributor, and consumer. Today, Station _____ presents another in a series of broadcasts designed to tell farm and city people more about the latest developments in the field of agricultural marketing. Late last month the Department of Agriculture stopped buying Irish potatoes under price support. This is as good a time as any to take a quick look at the 1947 potato program. So we've invited to our studios today _____, of the Production and Marketing Administration. Do you think you can give us a pretty good idea in a few minutes of the way this program has affected farmers and consumers this year, _____?

PMA: I think so, _____.

ANN: Before we went on the air you made some interesting comments about the long term aspects of potato production. I hope we'll have enough time to pass on some of these comments to our listeners. So let's move along with the review of potato support operations. First of all, how does it happen that purchase operations were ended in November? Last year, I recall the Department was buying 1946-crop potatoes almost continuously throughout the season.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20250
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

IN RESPONSE TO RESOLUTION 100, 81ST CONGRESS

RELATIVE TO THE PRODUCTION OF POTATOES

FOR THE YEAR 1949

THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE, in response to the resolution of the House of Representatives, relative to the production of potatoes for the year 1949, has the honor to submit herewith the following report:

The production of potatoes in the United States for the year 1949 was estimated at 1,100,000,000 bushels, or an increase of 10 per cent over the production of 1,000,000,000 bushels in 1948. This increase was due to a number of factors, including an increase in the area planted to potatoes, an increase in the yield per acre, and an increase in the number of crops per acre.

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It is noted that the production of potatoes in the United States for the year 1949 was estimated at 1,100,000,000 bushels, or an increase of 10 per cent over the production of 1,000,000,000 bushels in 1948. This increase was due to a number of factors, including an increase in the area planted to potatoes, an increase in the yield per acre, and an increase in the number of crops per acre.

PMA: There just isn't any need now for the Government to continue the support purchases. As you know, the reason we buy potatoes is to keep the price from dropping below ninety percent of parity.

ANN: I think most of our listeners are aware that price support operations for potatoes are required until the end of 1948 by a wartime law.

PMA: That's right, _____. While the war was on we needed top production of potatoes and many other crops. So Congress passed the Steagall amendment.....

ANN:which guaranteed farmers that for two years after the war they would be protected from price collapse. That's similar to the way that Uncle Sam protected manufacturers of war goods. But let's get back to the reasons why potato purchases have been discontinued.

PMA: Well, there's a pretty good commercial demand for these spuds these days. As a matter of fact, prices for US Number One Grade potatoes have been holding at or above support levels in all areas for sometime now. So there's no reason for the Government to continue buying potatoes.

ANN: That's logical, _____, I understand that support purchases this year were only a fraction of what you had to buy from the 1946 crop. Of course last year's crop was a real whopper.

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That's correct. I understand that support
operations this year will be a question of what you had
to pay from the 1946 crop. Of course last year's crop was
a real shoper.

PMA: It certainly was. In 1946 farmers grew 476 million bushels of potatoes. That was more spuds than had ever been grown in this country before. It was almost 100 million bushels more than the normal market could absorb.

ANN: So under the law the Government had to step in and buy up the surplus. How about this year, though?

PMA: That's a different story. Production is estimated at around 380 million bushels for 1947 and so there has been much less need for Government purchases. Just to show you the difference --- in 1946 the Department had to buy up over twenty percent of the record-breaking crop. This year, with potato production closer to what the market could absorb, we had to buy less than five percent of the crop.

ANN: That's quite a difference, _____. What happened to the potatoes that the Government did buy?

PMA: Practically all of them were put to good use, _____. Many are being distributed to school lunch programs and welfare institutions. Several million bushels have been exported for relief feeding. And most of the remainder of Uncle Sam's potato stocks have gone into alcohol, starch, or flour manufacture, or have been used for livestock feed.

ANN: What about all these stories we heard a few months ago about the Government destroying huge piles of potatoes?

PMA: I'm afraid that these stories don't give the true picture. Actually, the number of potatoes lost under the price support program added up to less than three percent of what we bought. And most of these were from the early potato harvest in the Southern States.

ANN: That's understandable. Early potatoes are highly perishable, and if they aren't refrigerated properly or aren't used immediately they're going to spoil.

PMA: Sure. Actually all potatoes are perishable, and heavy losses in handling the crop have always been the rule --- not the exception. For instance, in 1934, 41 million bushels of spuds were lost to the domestic market. At the same time the weather and price situation made farmers abandon 163 thousand acres of potatoes without even trying to harvest them. Last year we had a bigger crop, and there's no telling how many million bushels were actually saved by Government purchases and diversion into useful outlets.

ANN: But ever since the Department of Agriculture has been protecting the potato market, whenever a bushel of spuds spoils it gets a lot of publicity.

PMA: Of course, I'm not trying to say that just because losses are normal in handling a perishable crop there is any excuse for deliberate waste of food. Early in the season there were a few cases where the Department ordered small quantities of potatoes destroyed to prevent spoilage. In these cases all possible outlets had been filled, suitable storage space was not available, and there was nothing to do but destroy them. However, we have tried to put every possible bushel of potatoes to good use and I think that by and large we have succeeded very well. Less than one-tenth of one percent of all the potatoes which were grown this year were lost under the price-support program.

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by and large we have succeeded very well. Last year
one-third of one percent of all the potatoes which were
grown this year were lost under the price-support program.

ANN: We hear a lot of complaint that price support purchases are keeping food prices high. Do you care to say anything on that, _____?

PMA: When farm prices are too high, consumers lose. When they are too low, farmers lose. The whole purpose of the price support law is to prevent farm prices from falling below 90 percent of parity. I don't think anyone can honestly say that 90 percent of parity for potatoes is too high. It strikes me as about the fairest price level attainable both to farmers and to consumers. Potatoes are still one of the least expensive foods in terms of food value and their price is reasonable compared with other prices. And when you figure the cost of price support to the consumer you also have to consider what the price might have been if farmers had not had this protection.

ANN: You mean that if we hadn't had price support, potato prices might have been higher rather than lower?

PMA: It's quite likely that they would. Price support acted as an incentive to large-scale production. As a result we've had year after year of big crops at reasonable prices. If we had had even one short crop....higher prices would have resulted and the cost to consumers might have been even greater than the cost of the price support program.

ANN: It seems to me I've read that over a long period of time we've had a surplus of potatoes in this country in about seven out of every ten years. What would an ideal crop be, _____?

PMA: The potato experts in the Department of Agriculture have figured that for our present population a crop of 375 million bushels would just about meet our needs. That would also take care of normal shrinkage and loss, meet demands for starch manufacture, and exports.

ANN: If we had a crop of that size then, prices to growers would probably hold up pretty well and we wouldn't need large-scale price-support operations.

PMA: That's right. Actually that doesn't give us much leeway. There isn't much stretch to the normal demand for potatoes in this country. So if our crop runs as much as six percent over the 375 million bushel figure we've got a potato surplus. If it's six percent under then we've got a scarcity.

ANN: That means that planning potato production is like walking a tight rope. There's no telling in advance what the weather will do to your crops.

PMA: Right. Last year, for example, the national average yield of potatoes was almost 185 bushels an acre. This year the yield won't be quite as high ----- something less than 175 bushels an acre ----- but it's still way above average.

ANN: That seems to give us a pretty good survey of this year's potato support program, as well as some of the long-time aspects of potato production in this country.....

(USE FOLLOWING CLOSE IF PART I IS USED AS A SEPARATE SCRIPT.)

ANN:Thanks for being with us today, _____.
..... Friends, you have been listening to
_____ of the Production and Marketing
Administration in another of Station _____'s
series on agricultural marketing. This public
service broadcast has been brought to you with
the cooperation of the United States Depart-
ment of Agriculture.

PART II: ----- TURKEY FOR CHRISTMAS (7½ Minutes)

(USE FOLLOWING INTRODUCTION IF PART II IS USED AS A SEPARATE SCRIPT.)

ANN: The marketing of America's food is of direct
concern to everyone --- farmer, distributor,
and consumer. Today Station _____
presents another in the series of broadcasts
designed to tell farm and city people more
about the latest developments in the field of
agricultural marketing..... Our studio guest
is an old friend --- _____, of the
Production and Marketing Administration.....

ANN:Christmas is right around the corner, _____,
and I think that our listeners will want to hear some-
thing about prospects for the Christmas dinner. Leading
the parade on many family dinner tables this Yuletide will
be the traditional gobbler. What's the current supply
picture for turkeys _____?

PMA: Pretty good, _____. Particularly for the heavy birds. Holiday supplies are running about ten percent under last year. But there still should be enough in local markets to meet the demand. That's especially true of the large hens and toms.

ANN: I'm glad to hear that. I had heard that turkey production this year was quite a bit below 1946 --- about sixteen percent, I believe.

PMA: True enough, _____, but fewer turkeys have gone into storage this year than last. That's helped to make up for some of the drop in output. On the first of last month our turkey storage stocks were almost 20 million pounds less than at the same time last year. So most people shouldn't have any trouble finding a turkey for their Christmas dinner. Even though production this year was less than the past two years it was still the fourth largest on record.

ANN: That proves something about how popular the turkey has become. I can remember the time when turkeys were a lot rarer on the average holiday dinner table than they are today.

PMA: Yes, and it wasn't so long ago either. Back in 1929 the average American ate less than two pounds of turkey. Last year he ate about four and a half pounds, on the average.

ANN: Quite a jump. I guess that's because a lot of people have begun to look on turkey as more than just a Thanksgiving or Christmas dish. It's becoming a popular meal in restaurants and in many homes all through the year.

PMA: That's right. Back in the late thirties about 75 percent of all turkeys were marketed during November and December. These are still the two best months for turkey sales. But the trend is more and more toward spreading marketings through some of the other months of the year. Now only about sixty-five to seventy percent of all turkeys are sold during these two holiday months.

ANN: Part of this growth in popularity can probably be traced to the wartime meat shortages and the present high prices of red meat.

PMA: That certainly had a good deal to do with it, _____. But there are some other reasons as well. For one thing poultrymen are depending more and more on larger commercial hatchings. That means smaller hatching losses.

ANN: And of course there are also lower death losses on the farm. Turkey raisers have learned a lot in recent years about good flock management and how to control disease in the birds.

PMA: There you have one of the big developments in the poultry industry during the past few years. Turkey raising today is a very scientific and intensive business. Here are some figures to show what I mean. In the twenty-five years between 1929 and 1944 the number of turkey farms in this country dropped from almost 650 thousand to less than 200 thousand. At the same time that this drop was taking place, though, the number of turkeys raised was more than doubled.

ANN: That shift into highly specialized and intensive turkey raising has been most marked up here in the Northeast and in the Far West, hasn't it?

PMA: Yes. In this part of the country the number of turkeys raised per farm has increased about one thousand percent. And at the same time poultry experts in the Government and in industry have been working on improving turkey breeds.

ANN: That reminds me, _____. Is there any truth to the rumor that scientists have succeeded in breeding a turkey with four drumsticks.

PMA: No, I don't believe they have. Not on a commercial basis anyway. So I guess that the old arguments at the family dinner table will go on for a little while yet. But the scientists have been able to make some improvements in turkey breeds that are almost as remarkable.

ANN: You're referring now, I suppose, to the small apartment-sized gobblers that have been developed in Department of Agriculture laboratories.

PMA: Yes. The Beltsville Small White, which gives more good meat on a small turkey, is one of the breeds that will appeal to city people in smaller homes. And at the opposite extreme we've developed breeds like the Texas Broad-Breasted Bronze. These, of course, are more suited to larger homes and hotels and restaurants.

ANN: Recently there has been a lot of talk about selling turkey steaks just as you do beef steaks.

PMA: That's only one of the new marketing experiments that the poultry industry is working on. Out in Oregon there have also been some trials of a sort of turkey loaf which has been put up for the delicatessen trade. And of course many packers are putting out fully drawn turkeys --- ready for the oven. You'll also find turkey parts being sold in city markets. And there's been a big increase in the sales of smoked turkeys for gifts. These are only some of the ways in which the industry is trying to meet consumer tastes and enlarge the market for turkeys.

ANN: Let's get back for a moment now to the Christmas dinner table, _____. What about supplies of other foods?

PMA: Well those families who aren't going to eat turkey will find that stewing chickens are an excellent buy these days. As you know, poultrymen are making drastic cuts in their laying flocks in line with the grain conservation drive. So there should be plenty of good fowl on the market. By eating more stewing chickens consumers can make their food dollars go further and at the same time help out on the grain saving program.

ANN: And at this point I think we ought to remind our listeners that these stewing chickens are excellent for home canning and freezing.

PMA: That's right, _____. That's a good idea for all farm families as well as for those people in the city who have canning and freezing facilities. If our grain conservation drive is to be a success we've got to move this culled fowl off the farm in a short time. That's not easy during this period of heavy turkey marketing. So by canning and freezing these birds at home we'll be helping to increase the supply of chicken later on when it may be less plentiful and more expensive.

ANN: What about fruit for the Christmas stocking?

PMA: There are plenty of oranges around with the harvest in both Florida and Texas in full swing. There are also lots of other citrus fruits as well as apples and pears in most local markets. And, of course, we shouldn't forget dried fruit. We've got plenty of dried prunes, peaches, and raisins. Raisin prices, incidentally, are less than half what they were last year.

ANN: Well, when we talk of raisins we've also got to mention nuts.

PMA: There's no shortage of nuts either. Walnuts, filberts, and pecans are all plentiful these days...and generally cheaper than last year.

ANN: If you can say the same thing about cranberries and sweet-potatoes I guess we will have covered most of the Christmas dinner trimmings.

PMA: I think we can count on plenty of both these items. Cranberry production this year was somewhat below last year's very big crop but was still quite a bit above average. And there shouldn't be much trouble finding enough sweetpotatoes --- either fresh or canned.

ANN: You're already making my mouth water, _____. It's a good thing our time is up before my appetite becomes uncontrollable. Thanks very much for being with us today... .. Ladies and gentlemen, you've been listening to an interview with _____, of the Production and Marketing Administration, on another in our series of broadcasts on agricultural marketing. This has been a public service presentation of Station _____, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture.

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